



Redesigning the Ordinary

Constructing spectacular urban Spaces in Copenhagen

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Publication date:
2014

Document version
Early version, also known as pre-print

Citation for published version (APA):
Støvring, J., & Dam, T. (2014). *Redesigning the Ordinary: Constructing spectacular urban Spaces in Copenhagen*. Abstract from World in Denmark 2014. Nordic Encounters, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Redesigning the Ordinary

Constructing spectacular urban spaces in Copenhagen

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Keywords: Site specificity, Copenhagen, Urban space, pavement, Superkilen

The recent years' focus on improving the quality of urban life in Copenhagen has led to the construction of several new urban spaces, including the design of entirely new kinds of pavement. This new pavement design contrasts with older sections of the city, which appear as dilapidated areas representing a bygone era. This paper presents an architectural analysis of one such designed space, the prize-winning 'Superkilen' in Copenhagen, designed by the Danish architectural firm BIG. It describes the leading design motifs with special attention to the pavement design. Using the Superkilen case, we pose the general question: 'What is the role and significance of pavement in the contemporary design of urban space?'

'Superkilen' is explored by means of on-site analysis using the methods of morphology, syntax and significance as described by Hauxner in her *Reading and Drawing* (2009). The analysis focuses on the initial completion proposals and competition briefs as well as the broader significance of site specificity as 'place of action' as proposed by Mari Hvattum.

It is commonly recognized that the last decade has seen a shift in the Danish architectural paradigm toward a bolder idiom of conceptualism under the influence of Dutch architects such as Rem Koolhaas, a shift that expresses a reaction to a stagnant and self-referencing tradition, have taken place during the 2000s.¹ During the same period, urban design in Copenhagen has evolved toward a projects initiated by architectural competition. Placing the case of Superkilen alongside comparative studies of similar new urban spaces in Copenhagen, the paper concludes that the shift in paradigm and the lack of an overall coherent design strategy in the city of Copenhagen has turned the pavement into a prominent design feature in contemporary urban design. That, which was once ordinary, is now an object of design and redesign.

References

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¹ Kristoffer Lindhardt Weiss argues that the Danish contribution to the 2004 Venice Biennale, entitled 'Too Perfect – Seven New Denmarks', curated by Bruce Mau and the Danish Architecture Centre, together with new design technologies and globalization, marks the beginning of a new paradigm. See K. Lindhardt Weiss, 'The pragmatic turn', In K. Lindhardt Weiss & K.